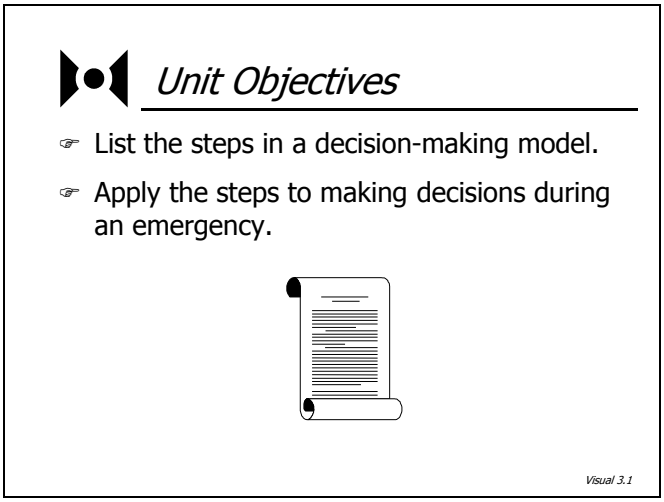
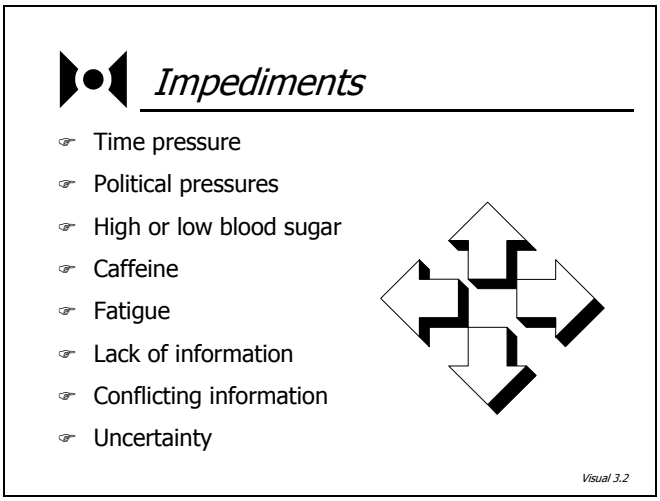
3. CRISIS DECISION MAKING



DECISION MAKING

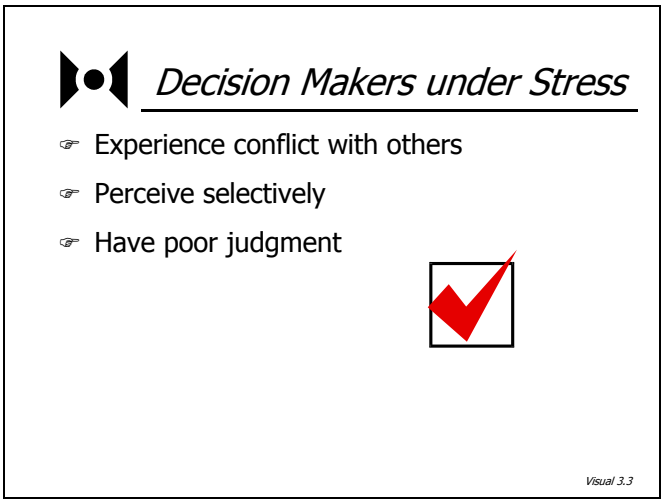
Decisions can be as simple as delegating a routine task or as complex as responding to a major crisis. Decision making in a crisis is made more difficult because of stress.



Impediments to making good decisions under stress include:

- Φ Perceived or real time pressure.
- Φ Possible political pressures.
- Φ High- or low-blood sugar levels as a result of erratic eating patterns.
- Φ Caffeine.
- Φ Sleep deprivation and resulting fatigue.
- Φ Lack of information.
- Φ Conflicting information.
- Φ Uncertainty.

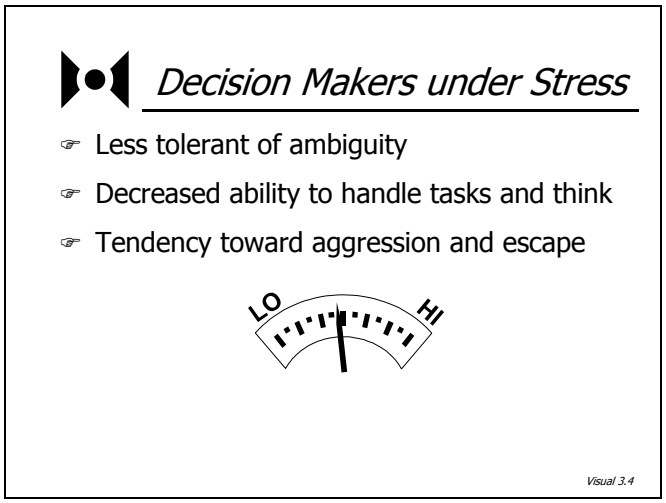
DECISION MAKING



Under stress, decision makers are more likely to:

- Φ Experience conflict with other key players.
- Φ Perceive selectively because of sensory overload, and thus perhaps miss important information.
- Φ Experience perception distortion and poor judgment.

DECISION MAKING

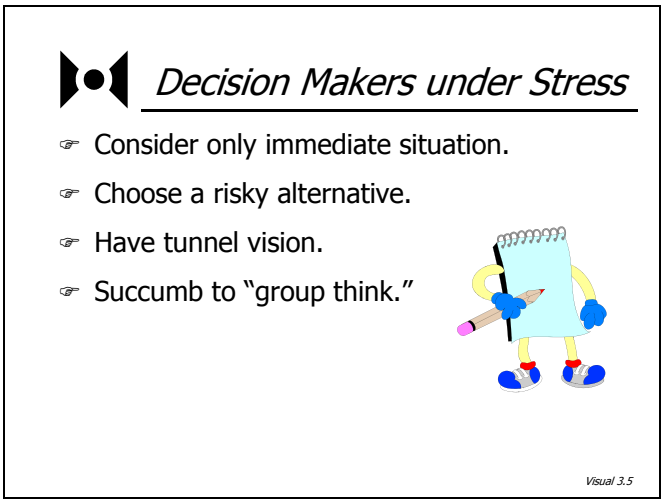


Φ Be less tolerant of ambiguity and thus perhaps make premature decisions.

Φ Experience a decreased ability to handle difficult tasks and work productively.

Φ Experience a greater tendency toward aggression and escape behaviors.

DECISION MAKING



Φ Consider only immediate survival goals, sacrificing long-range considerations.

Φ Choose a risky alternative.

Φ Get tunnel vision.

Φ Succumb to "group think."

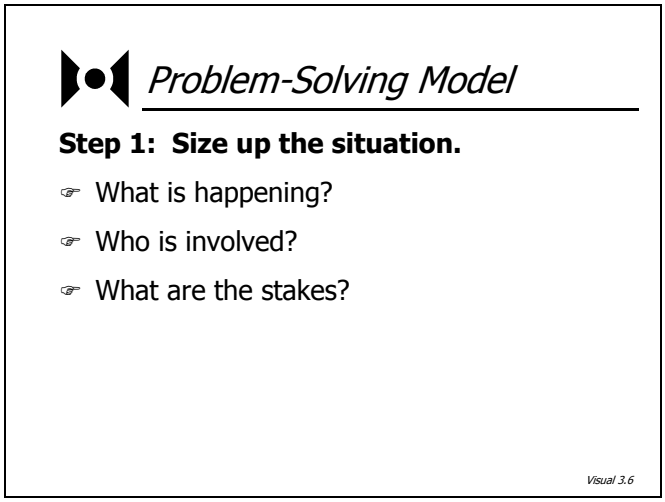
An important key to effective decision making in a crisis is being systematic. A good way to be systematic is to use a problem-solving model.

The next section will present a problem-solving model that has proven effective in emergency situations.

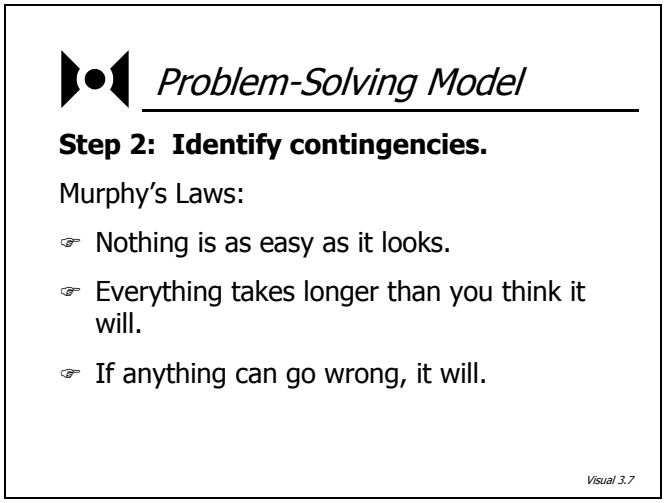
PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

There are different decision-making/problem-solving models. Each step in this model may be completed quickly, but every step must be considered. It is not necessary to document each step, but it is important to think through every step.

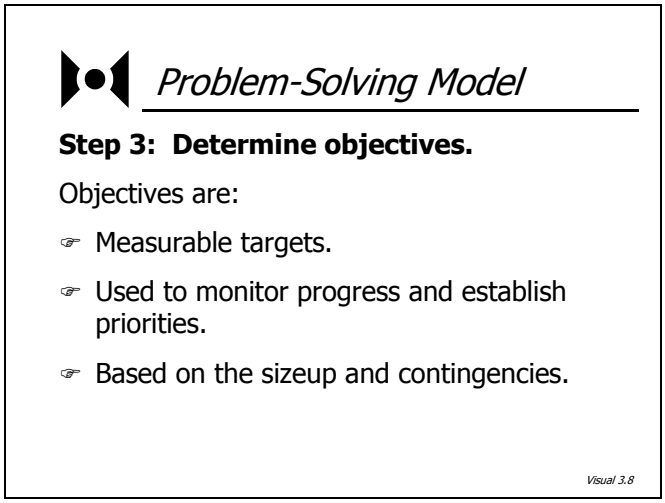
Step 1: Size up the situation.



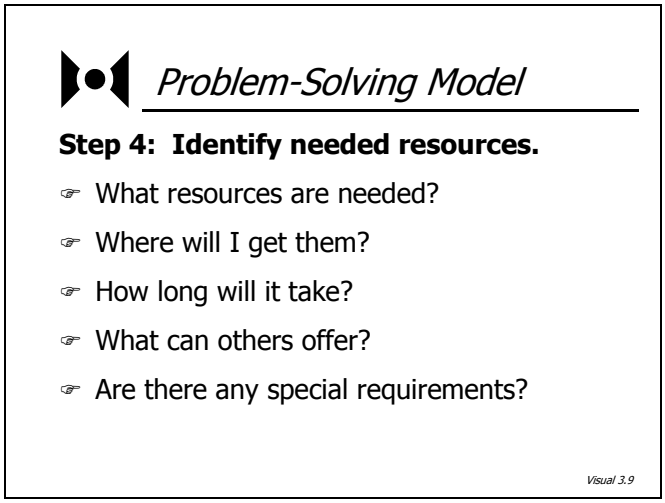
Step 2: Identify contingencies.



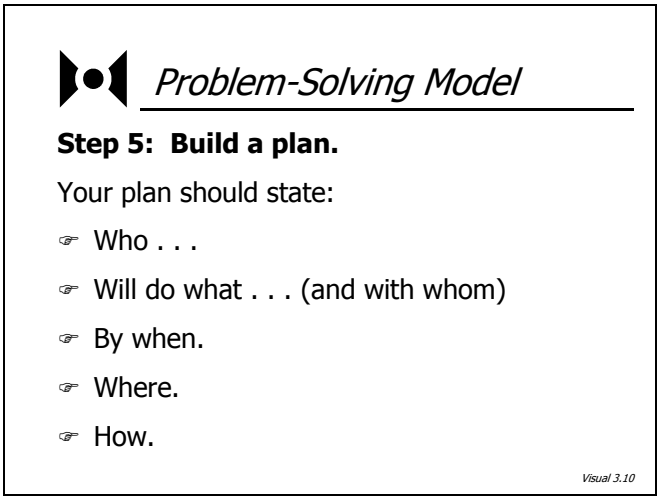
Step 3: Determine objectives.



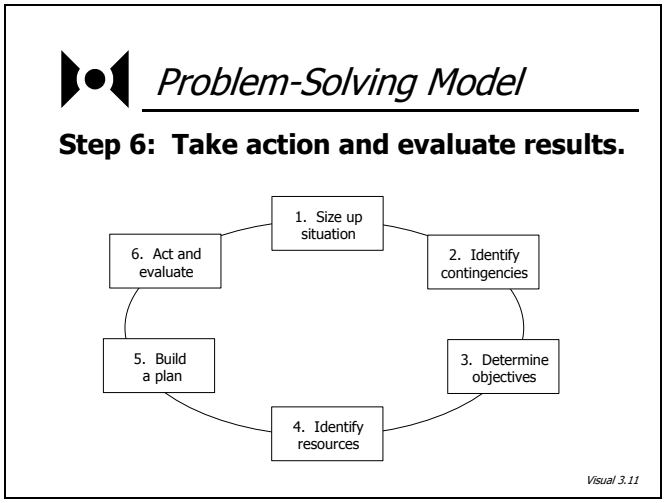
Step 4: Identify needed resources.



Step 5: Build a plan.



Step 6: Take action and evaluate results.



SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Instructions: Follow these steps to complete this exercise.

1. Take 20 minutes to read your group's scenario and apply the problem-solving model to identify the problem and potential solutions.
2. Select a spokesperson to present your group's responses to the class.

Scenario #1: Elected Official

Yesterday, a category 3 hurricane hit the beach city of Bayside. Emergency personnel at the bridge into Bayside have called the Mayor's office to report more than 200 angry residents and business owners demanding access to their beachfront property. You are that Mayor. According to city police, the access road is covered with debris and downed power lines, and the area is hazardous.

The problem is:

Contingency/ies:

Objective/s:

Resources needed:

Plan:

Action/s:

Scenario #2: Emergency Manager

The town of Middleville received a record 40-inch snowfall 2 days ago. The mayor ordered the snowplows to clear only emergency routes. The Emergency Manager's office had received several complaints about the impassable condition of the roads from doctors, nurses, dialysis patients, and others offering or requiring time-sensitive medical care. The complaints and requests for road work are more than can be accommodated. In addition, several major campaign contributors have demanded that roads be opened to their neighborhoods.

The problem is:

Contingency/ies:

Objective/s:

Resources needed:

Plan:

Action/s:

Scenario #3: Response Personnel

After an ice storm hit the town of Barlow, the power went out in many parts of the community, including the senior citizen complex. With the temperatures dropping and evening approaching, the Emergency Management Director has been faced with the dilemma of evacuating the population of elderly through the ice and cold or finding a temporary means of providing a warm and safe environment in their own building until power can be restored and normalcy returned to the complex.

The problem is:

Contingency/ies:

Objective/s:

Resources needed:

Plan:

Action/s:

Scenario #4: Incident Commander

You were the Incident Commander at a recently concluded hostage situation at a school. There were three deaths and 21 injuries during the standoff. The suspects are now in custody. You appointed an Information Officer to handle all media inquiries. You hear over the scanner that the media is reporting all the names and the details of the situation.

The problem is:

Contingency/ies:

Objective/s:

Resources needed:

Plan:

Action/s:

Scenario #5: ICS Staff

Flooding has inundated the downtown area. A three-block area must be evacuated. As the Operations Section Chief, you assign units to help with the evacuation. As officers are going door to door with the evacuation order, they encounter an elderly woman with several pets who will not leave unless she can take the pets with her.

The problem is:

Contingency/ies:

Objective/s:

Resources needed:

Plan:

Action/s: